



# Johnian News

Issue 5

Lent Term 1999

## Lady Margaret cruises to victory

The Lady Margaret Boat Club established itself as a leading trainer of oarsmen and women at the end of last term when the novice boats produced excellent results in the Michaelmas Term races.

Each year, freshers and other members of College are invited to join the LMBC and learn to row. This year the response was excellent, with the number of boats on the river limited only by the equipment available. The men put out five boats and the women put out four. They learnt to row in under eight weeks and then competed in the Clare Novice Regatta (a side-by-side knockout competition) and the Novice Fairbairn Cup (a timed race). Those in the senior crews take on the coaching commitments and ensure that the standard of novice rowing in the Club is as high as possible. This is not an easy task, but the LMBC has built up a reputation envied by the other boat clubs on the Cam. The LMBC, like the College, is a firm believer in providing opportunities to anyone who wishes to have a go.

The first men's novices beat CCAT (Anglia Polytechnic University) in the final of the Clare Novice Regatta to win the Cup, while the second men won the Plate Competition. The first women were beaten by CCAT in the final of the Cup and the second women beat the third women in the semi-final and went on to beat Churchill 2 in the final to take the Plate. In the Fairbairn Cup, the results were equally spectacular: the first men won the Cup, the second men came third overall (4 seconds behind Jesus I, the second-fastest boat on the day), LMBC 3 came fourth, LMBC 4 was the fastest fourth boat and beat a number of first boats and LMBC 5 also did admirably. In the women's competition, LMBC 1 came third, while LMBC 2 came 5th and were the fastest Second boat. LMBC 3 and 4 beat quite a number of first and second boats from other Colleges. Let us hope that the senior crews will be able to match this success in the May Bumps. ❀



Photograph by Jet Photographic

The first men's novice boat rowing to victory in the races



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## College news

The College launched an appeal to protect and extend our **sporting facilities** just over a year ago. This has proved necessary because of a fall in fee income, which is constrained by Government policy, and because of the large proportion of fixed costs, such as salaries.

The Lady Margaret Boat Club has long been supported by the Old Johnian Henley Fund which provides grants for equipment and training camps. A large proportion of the equipment in the Boathouse has been provided by the OJHF and it allows the Boat Club to offer opportunities to rowers at all levels. Last term, around 120 members of College learnt to row and the results in the novice races were spectacular (as featured on the front page of this issue).

The Field Clubs' position is becoming increasingly difficult, with wages accounting for a very large proportion of the running costs. We are very proud of the excellent condition of the playing fields, which is only made possible by the hard work of the Groundsmen.

In order to maintain our facilities at their current level, we need to raise £250,000 for each of the LMBC and the Field Clubs for an endowment fund. In addition, there are plans to modernise and extend the Boathouse, for which there is an urgent need. In particular the women's changing rooms will be enlarged to cater for the increased number of women rowing, and the facilities for land-training, an ever-increasing part of rowing training, will be improved.

We have been contacting sportsmen and women to ask for their support. If you have not received information about the appeal and would like to find out more, please contact Catherine Twilley, Development Officer at the College. ☼

The College has instituted an annual **Hinsley Memorial Lecture** in memory of Professor Sir Harry Hinsley (Master 1979-1989) who died last year. The first lecture took place on 4 March and was given by Lord Hurd, former Foreign Secretary, who spoke about 'The claims of justice in the making of foreign policy.'

The lecture was very popular, with around 300 people attending, and we were very pleased that all three of Harry Hinsley's children were able to join us for the lecture. ☼

The College **Rugby Football Club** has obtained sponsorship from Booz Allen & Hamilton, a US firm of management consultants. Max Livingstone-Learmonth, Captain, said 'this sponsorship has been a big boost to the Rugby Club and has meant we have been able to invest in new kit this year.' ☼



The Rugby Club in their new kit

*InPrint* is a new literary magazine which has been set up by students at the College. It publishes critical and creative work by members of the University.

The first issue has just been published and includes poems, works of fiction and articles. *InPrint* is available at a cost of £1.80 (excluding postage and packing). Anyone interested in buying a copy should contact Thomas Robert Smith, editor, at the College (email [trs25@cam.ac.uk](mailto:trs25@cam.ac.uk)). ☼

**Alan Thompson** (BA 1966) sent us this photograph, taken at his wedding in August 1998 in France. He comments: 'I wonder how many [Johnnians] can be gathered together purely as friends, especially 32 years after leaving College?'. Pictured are GA Worthington, AM Thompson, L Kane, M Millward, R Harrison, AJ Whittaker and JS Widger. ☼





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## A guiding star

*Fabien Beckers came to St John's in 1998 to read for a PhD in Physics. He did his undergraduate degree at Université Pierre and Marie Curie in Paris. For some years he has been working on a project to help blind and visually impaired people and has won several awards for his work in his native France.*

A few years ago, I came to the aid of a blind person who was lost. This made me realise that there was no method in existence for blind people to orientate themselves and to find their own way around a building and I began working on an idea to put this right. I carried out four years of theoretical research to produce a guiding system on my own, while studying for my undergraduate degree, and then set up a team to look at the technical aspects.

To help me develop the system, I contacted associations for the blind and spoke to blind people in the street to find out what kind of system they would use so that I could act as an intermediary to try to provide it. After my degree I took a year off to work on the project full-time and was supported by a number of very generous individuals.

I have called the system 'Polaris' because this is the Latin name for the guiding star. With this system we are aiming to provide something which will help guide blind people if they wish to use it, but which they will not have to use, and which will provide them with autonomy.

Polaris consists of a mobile tactile system placed on the handle of a blind person's cane or on a hand-held device. The individual is guided by electromagnetic waves transmitted by magnetic tags located on the walls. This means that anyone using the system can be led to the place of their choice, as long as the environment is equipped to use Polaris.

When a user enters an area in which the Polaris system can be used, they receive an audio message informing them of the different locations to which they can be guided. The user chooses their destination by pressing a button on a portable keyboard (much like using interactive telephone systems). They are then led to their chosen destination by a tactile compass that receives guidance from strategically placed magnetic tags.

I have designed the Polaris system to be immediately

and intuitively accessible and comprehensible to all potential users. The major advantages of the system are its discretion (both in terms of minimal physical encumbrance for the user and the absence of noise pollution for others), its durability, its adaptability (it is suitable for use within all types of architectural configuration in any country), and the minimal costs of its installation. Each magnetic tag costs only £1 which means that it will be cheap for companies and organisations to instal.

With financial aid from a variety of organisations, particularly the French Federation for the Blind, the Ministry of Youth and Canal + (a television company), the prototype has now been assembled. It was successfully presented at the Conference for the Handicapped in Paris last June and we have now set up a company in order to promote the system and protect the world patent.

After six years of hard work, the Polaris system has been proven to work. The next step for us is to refine and optimise the system. To do this we need to raise more funds. This is the most pressing objective at present, currently occupying the part of our team remaining in Paris. So let's cross our fingers... ☘

*If you wish to find out more about Polaris or if you are able to support the project, please contact Fabien Beckers at St John's College (email: fb226@cam.ac.uk).*



Fabien Beckers in the Cavendish Laboratory





During this stay in Tokyo (which was our longest in any one place), we were accommodated in one of the most luxurious hotels I have ever seen, which made the concert schedule, which was at times very hard work, much easier to cope with.

Having completed our main stay in Tokyo, we took the Bullet Train out to Kyoto and Osaka, to sing a concert in each of these cities. Kyoto is reputed to be very beautiful, and it did not disappoint. The afternoon that we arrived in Kyoto was spent wandering the streets, discovering hidden markets, ancient temples and the stunning Zen Gardens.

Once again the concerts were a great success, despite collecting some 'stalkers'. Both the boys and the Gents of the choir found the reaction of many of the female members of the audiences extremely amusing. The sight of crowds waving us off after concerts, accompanied by the flashes of cameras did the morale of the choir no end of good, although perhaps one or two of the Gents did get a little carried away with the autograph signing...

Finally, we returned to Tokyo to perform our last two concerts in Tokyo's most prestigious concert venue - Suntory Hall, before flying home on Christmas Eve. This was the final straight in what had been a quite brilliant tour in every respect. All our thanks must go to Christopher Robinson for his unruffled musical direction, to Shirley Robinson for keeping

Christopher unruffled, to David Thompson, Dr and Mrs Macintosh for their limitless patience in dealing with the boys, and especially to Martin Denny and Tim and Yoko Minton for organising such a professional, slick and extremely enjoyable tour.

I think that four sold-out concerts in Tokyo, in one week, is a fitting testament to the musical success of the tour. At the beginning of the year, Tim had been told that he was mad to book four major concert venues in Tokyo in a week and that only the Berlin Philharmonic could fill these. When he told us this, we knew we were justified in feeling a certain sense of pride. ☼

Gabriel Burchall (matriculation 1997)

*Gabriel Burchall is a member of the College Choir. He is in the second year of reading for a degree in Philosophy.*

*The Gentlemen of St John's (made up of the Choral Students) will be returning to Japan for a concert tour in September this year. The tour will again be organised by Tim Minton (BA 1980) and Yoko Minton, whose son, Edward, is a Chorister in the Choir. It is hoped that the full Choir will visit Japan again in the Year 2000, following the success of the tour in 1998.*



The Organ Scholars, Iain Farrington and Rob Houssart



## Notices

Dr Michael Neiditch (PhD 1978) is the Director of Endowment at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. He is happy to see Johnians who are visiting the area and who wish to visit the museum. He can be contacted by telephone on (202) 4880400 or by fax on (202) 4882695. ☼

Johnians living the US will be interested to hear that the College's credit card will soon be available. Further details will be available shortly from Catherine Twilley, Development Officer (email: Development-Officer@joh.cam.ac.uk). ☼

The Fourteenth Johnian Society Lecture was held on Tuesday, 23 February. Sir Percy Cradock, former Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister and Honorary Fellow, gave a talk entitled 'Morality and Foreign Policy'. The lecture attracted a large audience from across the University and provided an interesting insight into the complexity of foreign policy issues. The next Johnian Society Lecture will take place in 2001. ☼

## Dates for your diary

The next Oxford region event will take place on Wednesday 21 April 1999 at Oriel College, by kind permission of Mike Stephens (BA 1962), Domestic Bursar. The guests of honour will be Dr George Reid, Senior Bursar of St John's and former Tutor, and his wife. If you would like to attend, please contact Ms Elizabeth Albanis, St John's College, Oxford, who is organising the event. ☼

A memorial service for Mr Renford Bambrough will be held in the College Chapel on Saturday, 24 April 1999 at 12 noon. All are welcome to attend the service and tickets are not being issued. Mr Bambrough served as Tutor, Dean and President of the College and was formerly a University Lecturer in Philosophy. He died on Sunday 17 January 1999, aged 72 years. ☼

The annual Linacre Lecture will take place on 6 May 1999 in the Physiology Lecture Theatre 1 at 5pm. Professor Andrew Wyllie, formerly Professor of Pathology at Edinburgh University and now a Fellow

of the College will give a lecture entitled 'Apoptosis: Cell Death in Living Tissues'.

Members of College are welcome to attend. Further information can be obtained from Catherine Twilley, Development Officer. ☼

The College will again be holding a Johnian Weekend on 10 and 11 July 1999. The format of the weekend is based on the very successful Library open weekend held in 1995 to mark the opening of the new Library.

Johnians who matriculated in 1956-58, 1961-66 and 1977-79 are invited to attend any part of the weekend with their family and friends. There will be a series of lectures and exhibitions over the weekend and on Sunday 11 July there will be a Chapel Service at which the Choir will be joined by members of the Choir Association (former members of the Choir) to sing Mozart's *Coronation Mass*.

Invitations have recently been sent out and Johnians of any vintage resident abroad who expect to be in the UK at the time are welcome to request an invitation pack. Please contact Catherine Twilley, Development Officer, for further details. ☼

Jim Williams, the Head Groundsman, retires this year, after 36 years service. To mark this occasion, the Senior Treasurer of the Field Clubs, Dr Dick McConnell, is organising a cricket match on Sunday 11 July 1999, to which all Johnians who played field sports are invited. If you have not received your invitation and would like to attend, please contact Dr McConnell or Catherine Twilley, Development Officer, at the College. ☼

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